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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
January 15, 2009

**RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON
RESOURCES**
**COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION**

Administrator Stephen L. Johnson
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington D.C. 20460- 0001

Dear Administrator Johnson,

In light of our recent conversation, you may find the attached article that appeared in today's *Anchorage Daily News*, of interest. The Native Village of Emmonak has already reached heating oil prices of well over \$7 a gallon. Coupled with decreased income due to a poor fishing season, and a cold snap of below zero temperatures, residents are being forced to choose between feeding their families and heating their homes.

I fear a humanitarian crisis is on the horizon, and will be ensured as a result of the EPA's decision to deny a waiver to the production cap for Petrostar's North Pole Refinery. When Petrostar reaches their production cap in mid-March winter will not be over, and the already high price of heating oil will undoubtedly soar even higher. Many more communities may begin to mirror the situation in Emmonak. I strongly urge you to reconsider your position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Young", written over the printed name and title.

DON YOUNG
Member of Congress

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From the *Anchorage Daily News*, Jan. 15 2009--

**Letter tells personal side of Emmonak's fuel crisis
ENERGY CRUNCH: Resident had villagers describe their plight as
they make do, or do without.**

By KYLE HOPKINS
khopkins@adn.com

(01/14/09 22:12:32)

With a phone and a computer keyboard, Nicholas Tucker has turned a spotlight on his neighbors in the western Alaska village of Emmonak by telling stories of people trapped in a food and fuel crisis.

Earlier this month, Tucker asked fellow villagers to describe what Alaska's rural energy crunch meant to them. He says he talked to a 70 year-old husband who cries when he's alone because he can't feed his family, and a young wife who can't sleep because she doesn't know where she'll get her next gallon of heating fuel.

In a long letter, he spelled out the heart-rending plights of 25 households, identified only by initials. He sent it to politicians, a food bank, a Native corporation and rural newspapers. Alaska Newspapers Inc. published the letter on its Web site earlier this week, and statewide public radio followed with an interview. By Wednesday, the story of Emmonak's plight was spreading across the blogosphere, and state officials and others were scrambling to figure out what was going on.

Division of Community and Regional Affairs Director Tara Jollie said the state has been working with the community, and that she had talked with city officials there this week.

"I'm not getting the same sense of crisis in the tone of voice, but I am hearing from all parties that it's a real tough time," she said.

It's unclear whether things are worse in Emmonak than other villages in the hard-hit Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, or whether a single eloquent voice struck an Internet nerve.

In any case, by Wednesday Tucker's phone rang non-stop as churches offered to fly food to the village and strangers from the Lower 48 asked how they could help. The local Native store gave him a calling card Wednesday that Tucker planned to use to call the state.

"Have you heard anything about Emmonak? Is there anyone that can help us," he wants to ask.

Three factors have hammered the Yup'ik village -- home to about 800 people at the mouth of the Yukon River -- over the past year.

Local commercial fishermen didn't make any money from king salmon -- a staple of the economy -- Tucker said, and an early freeze-up forced the village to miss its winter fuel barge.

Then the cold snap hit.

Tucker says he suspects other nearby villages are hurting in the same way.

Heating oil \$11 a gallon?

Jollie, the head of the Community and Regional Affairs Division, said she got copies of Tucker's letter from the Emmonak city clerk and Angoon Sen. Albert Kookesh.

"We're working as fast as we can to be thoughtful and responsive. There's fact-finding that has to happen in any situation," she said.

A rural subcabinet appointed by Gov. Sarah Palin will review the Division's findings at a special meeting planned for Friday, Jollie said.

Palin's rural advisor resigned in October. Palin spokesman Bill McAllister said possible replacements have been interviewed, but as far as he knows, no one's been selected to fill the job.

Emmonak leaders hoped the state would declare a fuel emergency in the village when an early freeze kept the barge carrying heating fuel and gasoline from arriving in October. But state officials said such declarations are reserved for natural disasters, such as a storm destroying village fuel tanks.

Heating oil currently costs \$7.68 a gallon, according to the Emmonak village corporation that sells the fuel.

But that price could soon rise, because the corporation had to start flying in extra heating fuel last week to make up for the missed barge.

Former Emmonak City Manager Martin Moore estimated in December that flying in the oil could raise the price as high as \$11 a gallon.

'not messing around'

The same day heating oil began to arrive by plane, Tucker put out a call over VHF radio asking people to tell him their stories. More than 20 people replied.

Tucker said churches in Fairbanks are also planning to send food and money by air, while people from the Lower 48 are calling him to ask how they can help.

A local Catholic church plans to hold a miniature potlatch this weekend -- an event where people can bring a few bags of ramen or boxes of pilot bread for their neighbors, Tucker said.

Many of the people he talked to told him they're choosing between food and fuel.

Tucker describes himself as a longtime advocate for fisheries and social issues in the region.

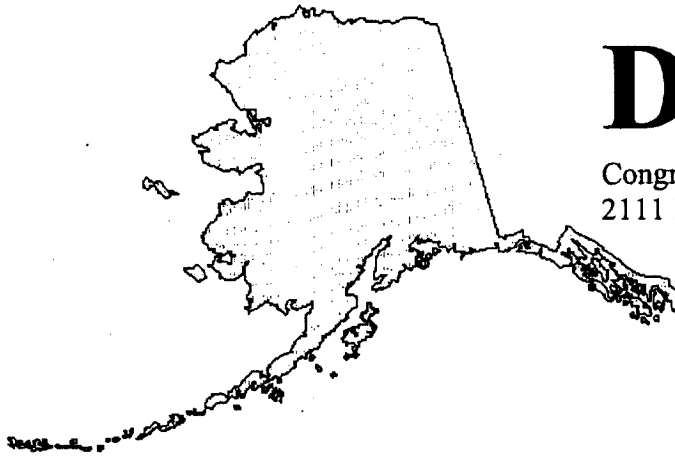
Asked what started Tucker on his mission, his wife Dorothy described a conversation she had one night with the couple's 8-year-old son.

The boy told her he was hungry.

"I said, 'I'm sorry we got nothing. We got no cereal we got nothing, so he went to bed hungry,'" Dorothy said.

Later, she talked to her husband.

"I told him I was really sad, and I was thinking of other people too. Some just have one meal a day, save the rest for the next day."



Don Young

Congressman for all Alaska

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TO: Administrator Johnson
FAX #: (202) - 501 - 1450
DATE: January 15, 2009
RE: Situation in Emmonak, AK + Petrostar waiver request

From:

Hon. Don Young	<u>X</u>	Michael Anderson	_____
Jason Suslavich	_____	Pamela Day	_____
Erik Elam	_____	Meredith Kenny	_____
Thomas Ryan	_____	Jeremy Price	_____
Paul Milotte	_____	Holly Croft	_____
		Bruce Newman	_____

Other: _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

PAGES: 6 (including this cover page)

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